

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



MIKE ANDERSON

Excellent Numbers of Young Fish

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual fall survey shows exceptional numbers statewide of young-of-the-year walleye, perch and northern pike.

"The end result is a combination of our stocking efforts and excellent natural reproduction," said Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, noting that a record number of lakes were stocked this year.

The Missouri River from Garrison Dam to Lake Oahe led the way with outstanding natural walleye reproduction. "This stretch was phenomenal, and this is noteworthy because it is all natural," Gangl said. "Nothing is stocked in the Missouri River."

Lake Oahe and Devils Lake also showed excellent numbers of young fish during the survey. "This was one of the best years ever for Lake Oahe, definitely a top five year," Gangl said. "Devils Lake was off the charts, with numbers six times greater than the long-term average."

Game and Fish did not stock walleye in Lake Oahe or Devils Lake in 2009. Lake Sakakawea wasn't nearly as good as the

other larger systems, but it was better than the last few years. "There was some natural reproduction, and numbers were similar to the end of the last drought in the early 1990s," Gangl said.

Many of the smaller lakes had good numbers of young fish as well. "Whether it was because of stocking efforts or on lakes with natural reproduction, it was pretty standard across the state with a really good take of fish this year," Gangl said. "Flooding across much of the state provided excellent fish habitat conditions."

In general, fisheries crews saw good numbers of early spawning species, such as walleye, pike and perch, Gangl said. "Pike and perch take advantage of flooded vegetation and with the large amount of water this year we saw good natural reproduction," he said.

Statewide, Gangl said forage species did really well. "Fathead minnows in smaller lakes were very abundant," he said. "On some of the bigger systems, there was really good reproduction of white bass, crappies and other minnow and sucker species."

Gangl said a disappointment from this fall's sampling was the lack of gizzard shad in the Missouri River and Lake Oahe. "Shad can't tolerate cold water for long periods, and the severity of last winter appears to have depleted much of the adult population, as few young-of-the-year shad were collected this year," he said.

Fall reproduction sampling provides biologists with an index that measures natural reproduction and stocking success. It allows biologists to see if fish did spawn, and how fingerlings survived the summer. All large and mid-sized reservoirs are sampled every year, and many small lakes are targeted as well.

"Good reproduction or stocking success is certainly the first step to good fishing, but those little fish have to survive their first couple of winters before they get to a size that anglers can catch," Gangl said.

Salmon Spawning Completed

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel stocked 15,000 salmon in Lake Sakakawea in October, and at the same time collected salmon for spawning purposes and stocking next year.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said fall stocking in the big lake – a practice largely brought on by low water levels – has been standard the past few years. "Historically, we've stocked salmon in spring," he said. "But when the lake's water level dropped we lost a large portion of our cold water habitat, causing us to hold some fish in the hatchery to stock in fall to try to enhance their survival."

Also similar to recent years, fisheries personnel used electrofishing to collect the salmon for the spawning operation. "We stopped using the salmon ladder a few years ago due to the low water levels, and in doing so discovered we can collect salmon just as easily by electrofishing," Gangl said. "Setting up and using the ladder was pretty labor intensive."

Biologists collected a larger egg take for next year compared to this year. "The high water level brought an increase in forage in the lake," he said. "We are planning a substantial increase in the number of salmon stocked next year."

Chinook salmon begin their spawning run in early October. Since salmon cannot naturally reproduce in the lake, Game and Fish Department and Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery personnel collect eggs and transport them to the hatchery.

Once the eggs hatch, young salmon spend several months in the hatchery before they are stocked back into Sakakawea, generally in spring.

Sportsmen Against Hunger Hoping for 700+ Donated Deer

With some changes in packaging and processing, North Dakota's Sportsmen Against Hunger venison donation program has set its goal to receive more than 700 deer across the state this fall.

Administered by North Dakota Community Action Partnership, a nonprofit agency that serves low-income families across the state, SAH raises money for processing of donated deer and coordinates distribution of ground venison to food pantries around the state.

The SAH program started in 2004, accepting 115 deer. The program continued to grow, taking in nearly 400 deer in 2007.

In 2008 the program only accepted 64 bow-harvested animals while state officials and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control investigated concerns over the potential for lead particles from bullets to remain in processed venison. In 2009, the SAH program will again accept rifle-harvested deer. "We are pleased to again be able to accept rifle harvested deer this year," NDCAP Executive Director Ann Pollert said. "We have funding in place to handle more than 700 deer, and our food pantries tell us they have a demand for all we can provide them."

The North Dakota Department of Health developed the following recommendations to minimize the risk to people who are most vulnerable to the effects of lead: (1) Pregnant women and children younger than 6 should not eat any venison harvested with lead bullets; and (2) older children and other adults should take steps to minimize their potential exposure to lead, and use their own judgment about consuming game taken with lead-based ammunition.

Based on those recommendations, SAH is adopting new processing guidelines to reduce the potential for lead particles to wind up in donated ground venison. This year, Pollert said processors will not accept deer shot in the hind quarters for the SAH program. In addition, donated deer will be processed individually, or only with other donated deer.

"We're also going to label each venison package with a caution that it should not be consumed by pregnant women or children age 6 and under," Pollert said, "and we're going to work with the food pantries to let them know to not distribute donated venison to households with young children."

Other clients, Pollert said, will be able to follow the Department of Health's recommendation and use their own judgment on whether they want to receive donated venison. "Based on the CDC study, consumption of venison, regardless of how it was taken or processed, does not appear to be a substantial health risk for adults, so we're comfortable following the Department of Health's guidelines and giving adults the option of whether they want to receive donated venison," Pollert said.

All area food pantries have been contacted about accepting rifle-harvested venison donations again and most are eager to be able to offer the product again. "Our pantry is enthusiastic to receive donated venison," said JoAnn Brundin, director at St. Vincent De Paul in Grand Forks. "It is a great protein source for us to offer our clients."

In addition to accepting deer shot with firearms, SAH strongly encourages bowhunters to continue donating deer as well. "We had great support from bowhunters last year," Pollert said.

A list of processors where hunters can take deer they want to donate is available at the NDCAP website at www.capnd.org.



Doe Licenses Available

Deer hunters can purchase unissued doe licenses throughout the hunting season and use them during the bow, deer gun and muzzleloader seasons. Hunters must abide by the unit, sex and species printed on the license.

Additionally, doe licenses that have already been issued and are printed with second, third or additional concurrent season designations can be used during any open season: bow season with a bow; the deer gun season with a bow, rifle, or muzzleloader; or during the muzzleloader season with a muzzleloader. Hunters must stay in the unit to which the license is assigned.

Refer to the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, or call (701) 328-6300 for information on remaining licenses. Licenses are available to residents and nonresidents.

The archery season is open through January 3, 2010; the regular deer gun season opens at noon November 6 and continues through November 22; and the muzzleloader season opens at noon November 27 and continues through December 13.

Nonresident Small Game Licenses

Out-of-state hunters are reminded that all nonresident small game and waterfowl hunting licenses are now sold exclusively through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's electronic licensing or telephone system. Paper licenses are no longer sold at license vendors.

Nonresident bird hunters can purchase their license anytime day or night by accessing the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. No additional costs or fees are added. Hunters must print out their own license, and lost licenses can be replaced by a click of the finger at no cost.

Some license vendors around the state are set up to use the electronic system, so people without Internet access at home can purchase a license at select vendors.

Nonresident small game and waterfowl licenses are also available by calling the Department's toll-free licensing line, (800) 406-6409. The license is mailed and a confirmation number is provided. A service fee is added for licenses purchased by phone.

Darkhouse Spearfishing Season Approaches

North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season opens on a number of state waters December 1, with the exception of Spiritwood Lake which opens January 1. The season extends through March 15. Legal fish are northern pike and nongame species.

All individuals who participate in darkhouse spearfishing must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to participating. Registration is available at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish Department office.

Darkhouse spearing is allowed for all residents with a valid fishing license and for residents under the age of 16. Nonresidents may darkhouse spearfish in North Dakota if they are from states that offer the same privilege for North Dakota residents. Minnesota was recently added to the list of states that allow nonresidents to darkhouse spearfish.

Lakes open to darkhouse spearing are:

Barnes County Eckelson Lake Complex	LaMoure County Diamond Lake Flood Lake	Sargent County Buffalo Lake
Benson County Devils Lake Silver Lake	Logan County Beaver Lake	Stark County Patterson (Dickinson Reservoir)
Bowman County Gascoyne Kalina Dam Spring Lake	McHenry County Buffalo Lodge Lake	Steele County North Tobiasson Lake
Burke County Powers Lake	McIntosh County Clear Lake Coldwater Lake Dry/Goose Lake	Sheridan County Coal Mine Lake
Emmons County Rice Lake	McLean County Crooked Lake Long Lake	Stutsman County Mallard Marsh Spiritwood Lake Sunday Lake
Foster County Juanita Lake	Mountrail County Stanley Reservoir	Williams County Cottonwood Lake Tioga Reservoir Lake Sakakawea from Garrison Dam to U.S. Highway 85 bridge at Williston and all tributaries upstream to the first vehicular crossing.
Grant County Heart Butte (Tschida)	Nelson County Lake Laretta Stump Lake	
Griggs County Sibley Lake	Ramsey County Cavanaugh Lake Devils Lake Lake Irvine Morrison Lake Sweetwater Lake	
Hettinger County Blickensderfer	Renville County Lake Darling	
Kidder County Alkaline Lake Cherry Lake Etta/Alkaline Complex Fresh Lake Helen Lake Horsehead Lake Lake Josephine Lake Williams Round Lake	Richland County Grass Lake	
	Rolette County Carpenter Lake Island Lake School Section	

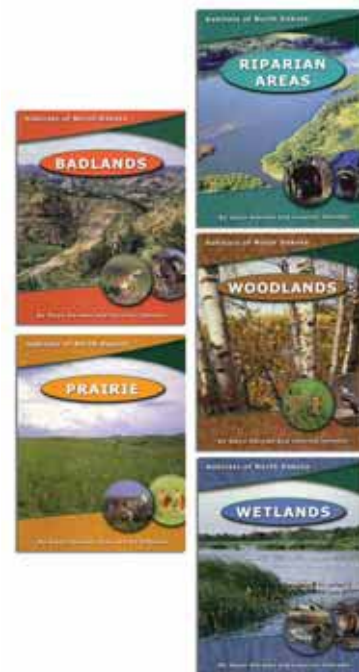
"Habitats of North Dakota" Receives Notable Document Recognition

"Habitats of North Dakota," a new five-volume conservation education effort, is on the list of notable government documents for 2009 recently released by the North Dakota Library Association.

As one of the top three documents for 2009, "Habitats of North Dakota" is also submitted for possible inclusion the American Library Association's notable government document list.

The "Habitats" series is a cooperative effort between the North Dakota Center for Distance Learning and North Dakota Game and Fish Department. It covers five major habitat types in the state – prairie, wetlands, woodlands, badlands and riparian areas – and became part of the state's fourth grade curriculum during the 2008-09 school year.

In addition to distribution to all fourth grade classrooms, "Habitats of North Dakota" materials are available online at ndstudies.org, and printed copies are available to other interested groups. Contact Sherry Neisar at sneiser@nd.gov for more information.





Motorists should be on the lookout for deer on roadways this time of the year.

Motorists Cautioned to Watch for Deer on Roads

Motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways, especially during late October through early December when deer are most active, resulting in the peak period for deer-vehicle accidents.

Bill Jensen, Game and Fish Department big game biologist, said motorists are advised to slow down and exercise caution after dark to reduce the likelihood of encounters with deer along roadways. "Most deer-vehicle accidents occur primarily at dawn and dusk when deer are most often moving around," he said.

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. However, motorists should be aware of warning signs signaling deer are in the area. When you see one deer cross the road, look for a second or third deer to follow. Also, motorists are urged to pay attention on roadways posted with *Deer Crossing* caution signs.

If an accident does happen, a local law enforcement agency should be contacted. Also, a permit is required to take parts or the whole carcass of a road-killed deer. Permits are free and available from game wardens and local law enforcement offices.

A few precautions can minimize chances of injury or property damage in a deer-vehicle crash.

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Don't swerve or take the ditch to avoid hitting a deer. Try to brake as much as possible and stay on the roadway. Don't lose control of your vehicle or slam into something else to miss the deer. You risk less injury by hitting the deer.
- If you spot deer ahead, slow down immediately and honk your horn.
- No published research supports the effectiveness of deer whistles on vehicles. Deer can't hear ultrasonic frequencies.

Lakes Closed to Winter Fishing

Anglers are reminded that three North Dakota lakes are closed to fishing for several months beginning in November.

As in past years, McDowell Dam (Burleigh County) and Lightning Lake (McLean County) are closed to fishing from November 1 through March 31.

In addition, Pathways Pond (Ward County) in Minot is also closed to anglers during the same time period.

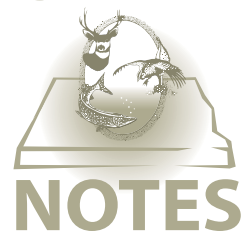
Two Named to Advisory Board

Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, and Joel Christoferson, Litchville, have been named Game and Fish Department advisory board members.

The two new advisors replace Merle Jost, Grassy Butte, in District 1, and Rita Greer, Marion, District 6. Both Jost and Greer served the maximum of two four-year terms as allowed by state law.

The eight Department advisors, each representing a multi-county section of the state, are appointed by the governor to serve as a liaison between the Department and public.

GAME & FISH STAFF



Jerad Bluem



Amy Jo Brown



Andrew Dahlgren



Cory Detloff

Four New Wardens on Duty

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has four new game wardens now on staff.

District game warden Jerad Bluem, stationed in Belfield (Stark County), has a degree in general resource management/environmental law enforcement from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He is originally from Buffalo City, Wisconsin.

Lake George, Minnesota native Amy Jo Brown has degrees in aviation law enforcement and natural resources law enforcement from the University of Minnesota, Crookston. She is a warden pilot stationed in Bismarck.

Lisbon native Andrew Dahlgren is a district game warden stationed in LaMoure (LaMoure County). He has a degree in zoology with an emphasis on natural resource management from North Dakota State University.

District game warden Cory Detloff, stationed in Williston, received degrees in natural resources law enforcement and agricultural education from the University of Minnesota, Crookston. He is from Bertha, Minnesota.

Elstad Receives 2009 Trees Award

Scott Elstad, Game and Fish Department aquatic habitat supervisor, has received the 2009 Natural Resource Professional award from the North Dakota Forest Service and North Dakota State University.

Elstad manages the Department's Save Our Lakes program, which provides financial support to landowners to install best management practices, such as riparian plantings, sediment dams, grazing practices, feedlot management and in-lake projects.

The Save Our Lakes program has helped plant trees and shrubs around local lakes from Brewer Lake in Cass County to a pond near Beach in Golden Valley County.

Elstad and many other award winners were honored at the Trees Bowl football game at NDSU in September.



Scott Elstad



Corey Erck



Dan Hoenke

Erck, Hoenke Attend Police Staff and Command School

North Dakota Game and Fish Department regional game warden supervisors Corey Erck, Jamestown, and Dan Hoenke, Dickinson, recently graduated from Northwestern University's School of Police Staff and Command. The 10-week program was held in Bismarck.

The school provides upper-level college instruction, including major topics of management and management theory, organizational behavior, human resources for law enforcement, budgeting, staffing allocation and personnel deployment.

Other Game and Fish staff who have completed the school are Robert Timian, chief game warden, and Paul Freeman, warden supervisor for northeastern North Dakota.